

Message Text

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ACTION AF-04

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 EUR-08 IO-03 SAM-01 NSC-05 NSCE-00

INR-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 L-01 PM-03 SP-02 PRS-01 SCCT-01

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P 281719Z OCT 75

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5930

INFO AMCONSUL LUANDA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY LISBON PRIORITY

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AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY LAGOS PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY ACCRA PRIORITY

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 LONDON 16458

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, AO

SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH SAVIMBI

SUMMARY: EMBASSY OFFICER MET FOR TWO HOURS WITH ANGOLA'S
UNITA PRESIDENT JONAS SAVIMBI OCTOBER 26. SAVIMBI RE-
COUNTED HIS FEARS THAT POSSIBLE LEFT-WING COUP IN LISBON

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WOULD RESULT IN COMMUNIST GOVERNMENT THAT WOULD TRANSFER

SOVEREIGNTY TO MPLA ON NOVEMBER 11. HE SAID UNITA AND FNLA WOULD THEN FORM RIVAL COALITION GOVERNMENT IN NOVA LISBOA, BUT BEFORE INDEPENDENCE WOULD LAUNCH MAJOR OFFENSIVES IN BOTH NORTH AND SOUTH ANGOLA. SAVIMBI DESCRIBED HIS LOGISTICAL PROBLEMS AND HIS SOMETIMES DIFFICULT RELATIONS WITH MOUTU AND KAUNDA. END SUMMARY.

1. EMBASSY OFFICER MET WITH DR. JONAS SAVIMBI IN HIS SUITE AT LONDON'S GROSVENOR HOUSE HOTEL ON THE EVENING OF OCTOBER 26. THE RENDEZVOUS WAS ARRANGED BY R. W. "TINY" ROWLAND, PRESIDENT OF LONHRO INDUSTRIES, WHO CALLED EMBASSY OFFICER THAT MORNING. ROWLAND SAID HE HAD RECENTLY DISCUSSED ANGOLA WITH UNDER SECRETARY SISCO IN WASHINGTON AND KNEW THE AMERICANS WANTED TO BE KEPT INFORMED. HE CLAIMED THAT WORKING CLOSELY WITH SAVIMBI, HE HAD "JUST LINED UP THE NIGERIAN ATTORNEY GENERAL," BY WHICH HE INFERRED THAT THE NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT, HITHERTO NEUTRAL IN ANGOLAN POLITICS, WAS NOW PREPARED TO SUPPORT UNITA. FURTHERMORE, ROWLAND SAID, HE WAS ABOUT TO TAKE SEVERAL LETTERS TO KHARTOUM FOR PRESIDENT NUMAYRI AND BELIEVED SUDAN WOULD SOON JOIN THE PRO-UNITA RANKS. ROWLAND SAID SAVIMBI WANTED TO TALK WITH AN AMERICAN DURING HIS BRIEF STAY IN LONDON AND EMBASSY OFFICER AGREED TO THE EVENING MEETING. SAVIMBI'S FOREIGN MINISTER JOHN KAKUMBE AND UNITA EUROPEAN REPRESENTATIVE MICHAEL FERNANDEZ JOINED THE CONVERSATION, ALTHOUGH THEY DEFERRED THROUGHOUT MOST OF THE EXCHANGE TO THEIR LEADER'S STRONG, CONFIDENT AND OFTEN ELOQUENT STATEMENTS ON ANGOLAN POLITICS.

2. SAVIMBI BEGAN THE TALK WITH AN EXPLANATION OF HIS LONDON VISIT. FRIENDS, HE SAID, HAD ARRANGED FOR HIM TO SEE A BRITISH DOCTOR BECAUSE OF AN AILMENT GIVING SHARP PAINS IN THE RIGHT SIDE OF HIS BODY. THE MALADY HAD CAUSED HIM MUCH TROUBLE OVER THE LAST MONTH OR SO, BUT UNFORTUNATELY HE WOULD NOW HAVE TO CANCEL THE FOLLOWING MORNING'S MEDICAL APPOINTMENT FOR HE WAS DUE TO DEPART THAT NIGHT FOR LUSAKA AND AN URGENT MEETING WITH PRESIDENT KAUNDA. THEREAFTER, HE WOULD HAVE TO RETURN TO ANGOLA TO SEE HIS COUNTRY THROUGH THE NEXT TWO CRUCIAL WEEKS.

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3. EMBASSY OFFICER ASKED FOR SAVIMBI'S BEST ESTIMATE OF WHAT WOULD TRANSPIRE NOVEMBER 11, THE DATE SET FOR ANGOLAN INDEPENDENCE. SAVIMBI REPLIED THAT HE HAD JUST COME FROM PARIS WHERE HE HAD MET WITH A SPECIAL ENVOY OF MELO ANTUNES AND ANOTHER REPRESENTING THE PORTUGUESE SOCIALIST PARTY. ANTUNES HIMSELF HAD ORIGINALLY PLANNED TO SEE SAVIMBI, BUT DELICATE DEVELOPMENTS IN LISBON HAD

KEPT HIM AT HOME. SAVIMBI SAID THE ENVOYS HAD TOLD HIM THAT PORTUGUESE COMMUNISTS WERE PLOTTING A COUP D'ETAT DESIGNED TO INSTALL THEMSELVES IN POWER BEFORE THE DATE FOR ANGOLAN INDEPENDENCE. ON NOVEMBER 11, THE MPLA WOULD PROCLAIM INDEPENDENCE AND CONTROL OF ANGOLA, AND THE NEW COMMUNIST GOVERNMENT IN LISBON WOULD RECOGNIZE THE CLAIM AND LEGALLY TRANSFER SOVEREIGNTY. THIS, SAVIMBI SAID, WOULD BE THE WORST OF POSSIBILITIES, FOR NOT ONLY WOULD IT LEGITIMIZE THE MPLA GOVERNMENT, BUT ALSO RELEGATE UNITA AND FNLA TO REBEL STATUS.

4. IF A COMMUNIST COUP IN LISBON IS NOT SUCCESSFUL,

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INR-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 L-01 PM-03 SP-02 PRS-01 SCCT-01

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P 281719Z OCT 75

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5931

INFO AMCONSUL LUANDA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA PRIORITY

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LIMDIS

SAVIMBI SAID HE WAS EIGHTY PERCENT CERTAIN MPLA WOULD STILL CLAIM INDEPENDENCE AND SOVEREIGNTY ON NOVEMBER 11. IN THIS EVENT, FNLA AND UNITA WOULD FORM THEIR OWN RIVAL GOVERNMENT IN NOVA LISBOA. FIGHTING WOULD CONTINUE AT HOME WHILE THE TWO GOVERNMENTS WOULD COMPETE ABROAD FOR INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION. LOOKING AT KAKUMBE AS IF HE
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WERE UNITA'S CHIEF WHIP, SAVIMBI PREDICTED THAT MPLA COULD COUNT ON RECOGNITION FROM ONLY TWELVE AFRICAN GOVERNMENTS. HE WOULD NOT SAY FOR CERTAIN HOW MANY WOULD STAND UP FOR THE NOVA LISBOA GOVERNMENT, BUT BELIEVES THAT IN THE NEXT FORTNIGHT AN ADDITIONAL THREE OR FOUR AFRICAN LEADEPS WOULD DECLARE FOR UNITA-FNLA. SAVIMBI DISMISSED THE POSSIBILITY OF ANY PRE-INDEPENDENCE COALITION WITH MPLA EVEN IF ENDORSED BY THE PORTUGUESE OR THE OAU, SAYING THAT THE TWO MOVEMENTS WERE FUNDAMENTALLY OPPOSED. NETO, HE STATED, CREATED HIS ENEMIES THROUGH PROVOCATION: ROBERTO, MOBUTU, AND THE AMERICANS. MPLA, BY FLAILING AWAY AT ALL WHO DISAGREED WITH ITS GOALS, HAD ISOLATED ITSELF AND RENDERED ITS LEADERSHIP INCAPABLE OF GOVERNING ANGOLA.

5. ZAMBIAN PRESIDENT KAUNDA IS VITAL FOR THE UNITA CAUSE, SAVIMBI SAID. WITH A VIGOROUS SWEEP OF THE ARM, HE EXCLAIMED, "KAUNDA MUST BE COMMITTED TO UNITA." SAVIMBI EXPLAINED THAT WHILE WOODED AWAY FROM THE MPLA BANNER, KAUNDA HAD STILL NOT ESPOUSED UNITA IN AN IRREVERSIBLE WAY. SAVIMBI RECOGNIZED THE SWIRL OF PRESSURES AROUND THE ZAMBIAN PRESIDENT, PARTICULARLY HIS DEPENDENCE ON PORT FACILITIES CONTROLLED BY TWO MPLA SYMPATHIZERS, NYERERE AND MACHEL. (IF THERE IS ANY DEVIL OTHER THAN NETO IN SAVIMBI'S DIABOLISM, IT IS SAMORA MACHEL WHOM UNITA ACCUSES OF SUPPLYING WEAPONS, TROOPS, AND IDEOLOGY TO MPLA.) BUT HE HOPES TO WIN KAUNDA'S FIRM COMMITMENT BY RUNNING ARMAMENTS THROUGH LUSAKA AIRPORT. KAUNDA HAD EARLIER OFFERED THE AIRPORT FOR UNITA'S USE AFTER ITS NORMAL 2200 CLOSURE, BUT SAVIMBI HAD NOT YET BEEN ABLE TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THIS PROMISING AVENUE THAT WOULD NOT ONLY EASE UNITA'S LOGISTICAL PROBLEMS, BUT ALSO TIE KAUNDA TO THE FORTUNES OF THE MOVEMENT. SAVIMBI HOPES KAUNDA'S OFFER WILL BE RENEWED AT THEIR NEXT MEETING AND

THAT HE CAN ARRANGE FOR SUPPLIES FROM KINSHASA OR DIRECTLY FROM ABROAD TO TRANSIT LUSAKA.

6. SAVIMBI CLAIMED THAT THE ROLES OF PRESIDENT MOBUTU AND HOLDEN ROBERTO IN THE ANGOLAN DRAMA HAD BEEN MISUNDERSTOOD. MOBUTU, HE SAID, HAD PERSONALLY AND PERSISTENTLY ATTEMPTED TO MAKE GOOD ON HIS OFFERS OF SUPPORT FOR
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UNITA. SAVIMBI RECOUNTED SEVERAL LAUGH-I-COULD-HAVE-CRIED STORIES ABOUT OBTAINING ARMAMENTS FROM ZAIRE: DISAPPEARING AIRPLANES, AVARICIOUS OFFICERS, NOW YOU SEE THEM, NOW YOU DON'T BOXES OF AMMUNITION. MOBUTU'S INTENTIONS ARE ALL IN THE RIGHT PLACE, SAVIMBI SAID, BUT ZAIRE'S BUREAUCRACY, INCOMPETENCE, AND CORRUPTION HAD RESULTED IN AN IRREGULAR AND INADEQUATE FLOW OF SUPPLIES. TURNING TO ROBERTO, SAVIMBI SAID THE FNLA LEADER'S TARNISHED IMAGE IS NOT DESERVED. ROBERTO HAS WORKED HARD AND COURAGEOUSLY FOR ANGOLAN INDEPENDENCE. HE AND HIS CADRE, HOWEVER, HAVE BEEN TOO LONG IN KINSHASA AND HAVE CONSEQUENTLY DEVELOPED A STYLE AND MANNER SLIGHTLY FOREIGN TO THE ANGOLAN SCENE. COMMUNICATION IS ROBERTO'S MAJOR PROBLEM, SAVIMBI CLAIMED, AND NUMEROUS MISUNDERSTANDINGS HAVE CREATED AN ATMOSPHERE IN WHICH MOST ANGOLANS FIND THEMSELVES UNCOMFORTABLE WITH ROBERTO'S LEADERSHIP.

7. SAVIMBI POSTULATED THAT MPLA HAS FOUR STRENGTHS: LUANDA, ARMAMENTS, MOBILITY, AND CUBANS. THE ANGOLAN CAPITAL IS NOT SO MUCH PRO-MPLA AS ANTI-EVERYTHING ELSE, SAVIMBI SAID. INTENSELY TRIBAL, LUANDANS ARE NOTED FOR THEIR HOSTILITY TO OUTSIDERS, AND THIS ETHNIC AVERSION RATHER THAN POLITICS WILL MOTIVATE THEIR RESISTANCE TO AN FNLA-UNITA ATTEMPT TO CAPTURE THE TOWN. AMPLE SOVIET SUPPLIES OF BOTH ARMOR AND ARTILLERY HAVE MADE A TELLING DIFFERENCE IN CLASHES WITH THE MPLA, SAVIMBI CLAIMED. WHAT MOST WORRIES HIM NOW, HOWEVER, IS THE LIKELY INTRODUCTION OF AIRCRAFT INTO THE WAR ONCE MPLA HAS PROCLAIMED INDEPENDENCE AND THE PORTUGUESE HAVE DEPARTED THE COUNTRY. SAVIMBI'S INTELLIGENCE REPORTS THAT MPLA HAS BEEN ASSURED BY ITS BACKERS THAT SOPHISTICATED WEAPONRY, INCLUDING AIRPLANES, WILL BE AVAILABLE AFTER NOVEMBER 11. SAVIMBI THEN EXPLAINED THAT MPLA'S TACTICAL MOBILITY HAS ALSO BEEN A FACTOR IN ITS MILITARY SUCCESSES. NETO'S COMMANDERS ARE SKILLFUL IN MOVING THEIR BEST TROOPS FROM ONE FIGHT TO ANOTHER WITH SPEED AND EFFICIENCY SO THAT THEIR

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INR-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 L-01 PM-03 SP-02 PRS-01 SCCT-01

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P 281719Z OCT 75

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5932

INFO AMCONSUL LUANDA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA PRIORITY

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LIMDIS

MOST SEASONED SOLDIERS ARE UTILIZED TO MAXIMUM ADVANTAGE.
BUT, SAVIMBI PREDICTED, TIME WILL WEAR AWAY AT THIS EF-
FECTIVE MANEUVERING FOR THE BEST MPLA TROOPS, ALWAYS EX-
POSED, WILL SOON TIRE OR DIE. FINALLY, SAVIMBI SAID, A
GROWING CUBAN PRESENCE IN THE MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT OF
THE MPLA HAS BROUGHT THEIR ARMY TO A RESPECTABLE LEVEL OF
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MILITARY SOPHISTICATION. PREVIOUSLY, CONCENTRATED FIRE POWER WOULD CARRY THE DAY AGAINST THE MPLA, BUT NOW, SAVIMBI NOTED, CUBANS ON THE BATTLEFIELD ARE LEADING THEIR MPLA COHORTS IN A SERIES OF SKILLED TACTICAL MOVEMENTS THAT DO NOT NECESSARILY SPELL VICTORY FOR WHICHEVER SIDE HAS THE MOST MEN OR THE MOST GUNS.

8. SAVIMBI SAID THAT COMBINED FNLA-UNITA TROOPS WILL ATTEMPT MAJOR OFFENSIVES WITHIN THE NEXT TWO WEEKS IN THE HOPES THAT NOVEMBER 11 WILL FIND MPLA REELING AND CLEARLY NOT IN CONTROL OF THE COUNTRY. IN THE NORTH, FNLA WILL PRESS HARD AGAINST LUANDA. IT DOES NOT EXPECT TO TAKE THE CAPITAL BUT WILL ATTEMPT TO APPROACH WITHIN RANGE FOR A SUSTAINED ARTILLERY BOMBARDMENT. IN THE SOUTH, UNITA WILL PUSH AGAINST LOBITO. SAVIMBI RECOGNIZES HOW FUNDAMENTAL THIS PORT CITY IS FOR HIS PROSPECTS OF LONG-TERM MILITARY SUCCESS. POSSESSION OF LOBITO WOULD FORCEFULLY DISPUTE MPLA'S CLAIM TO CONTROL OF ANGOLA'S IMPORTANT REGIONS AND LEAVE IT WITH LITTLE MORE THAN AN ENCLAVE AT LUANDA. MOREOVER, THE RAILHEAD AT LOBITO WOULD MAKE UNITA EVEN MORE ATTRACTIVE TO KAUNDA AND HIS MOUNTING STORES OF UNMOVEABLE COPPER. AND FINALLY, LOBITO WOULD GIVE SAVIMBI A MAJOR PORT THROUGH WHICH HIS ARMY COULD BE ASSURED OF A STEADY FLOW OF EQUIPMENT. SO UNITA WILL TRY FOR LOBITO, SAVIMBI CLAIMED. HE HAS THE MEN AS WELL AS THE SYMPATHIES OF THE CITY'S POPULATION. BUT HE MAY NOT HAVE THE ARMS AND AMMUNITION. ON THIS SCORE, SAVIMBI SAID, HE IS DESPERATE AND FRUSTRATED. TO BE EFFECTIVE, A SOUTHERN OFFENSIVE MUST BE ASSURED OF RELIABLE LOGISTICAL SUPPORT, AND WILLING AS THEY MAY BE, NEITHER MOBUTU NOR KAUNDA IS THE ANSWER.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: INDEPENDENCE, COALITION GOVERNMENT, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, LIBERATION FRONTS, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 28 OCT 1975
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: CunninFX
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975LONDON16458
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X1
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750373-0960
From: LONDON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19751014/aaaaamqf.tel
Line Count: 367
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 7
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: CunninFX
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 27 MAY 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <27 MAY 2003 by CunninFX>; APPROVED <07 OCT 2003 by CunninFX>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CONVERSATION WITH SAVIMBI SUMMARY: EMBASSY OFFICER MET FOR TWO HOURS WITH ANGOLA'S
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, PDEV, AO, US, MPLA, UNITA, FNLA, (SAVIMBI, JONAS)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006